

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
NEED FOR ADDITIONAL JUDGESHIPS
INFORMATION POINTS – DEC. 2005**

- Riverside County currently has 1,877,000 residents.ⁱ This represents a more than 20 percent increase in population from the year 2000 (US Census Bureau).
- On the US Census Bureau's list of the 100 Fastest Growing Counties, Riverside County ranks #40 in the nation and #2 in the state. (Placer County in Northern California is #1.)ⁱⁱ Riverside County housed 10 of the 50 fastest growing cities in the state (April 1, 2000 US Census). The City of Murrieta, near the San Diego County border, ranked second on this list. The city of Beaumont, located in the county's mid region, ranked sixth.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Since the year 2000, the number of judicial officers (judges and commissioners) has grown only by one, when one new judgeship was added to the bench in late 2001. Riverside County now has a total of 69 judges and commissioners.
- Riverside's current judicial complement of 69 bench officers is equal to 3.7 judicial officers per 100,000 residents – the lowest percentage in the court's history. The statewide number of judicial officers per 100,000 population is 5.2. Among the 14 most populated counties in the state, Riverside's ratio of judicial officers to residents is the lowest.^{iv}
- During FY 2003-04 (July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004), Riverside County Superior Courts had 441,116 total filings, which translated into 6,393 filings per judicial officer. This is the third heaviest burden in the state behind the much smaller systems of Inyo and Merced counties. Close behind Riverside were Glenn (#4), Ventura (#5), and San Bernardino Counties (#6). The Southern California counties of Orange, Los Angeles, and San Diego ranked 18th, 20th, and 27th, respectively.^v (The state's average is 4,608 filings per judicial officer.)
- According to a Judicial Council judgeship needs study done in 2004, the Riverside County court system needed 121 judicial officers in that year. That number is based on the average number of filings from FYs 00/01 to 02/03.^{vi} The court's shortage of judges is so critical that it must rely on the Judicial Council's Assigned Judges' Program to provide some relief. On any given day, there are seven to ten retired judges from the program sitting countywide to hear criminal trials. This helps but because Riverside's need is so great, these additional resources hardly make a dent. Having a retired (not elected) judge hear their case denies the public their right to have their case heard by an elected judge – a guarantee provided by the California Constitution.
- From Fiscal Year 2001/02 to FY 2004/05, the court's number of felony trials increased by 118 percent, from 182 to 397.
- In order to deal better with the increasing caseload, the court convened a Court Congestion Committee in early 2005, made up of representatives from the court, District Attorney, Public Defender, Indigent Defense Counsel, Probation, and the Sheriff's Department. Holding mandatory settlement conferences for certain types of felonies is one solution this committee has implemented to reduce the number of criminal cases going to trial. Despite this action and others, the court still has more cases going to trial than judges to try them.
- Because the Riverside County Superior Court judicial officers and staff utilize technologies to be as efficient as possible, our dispositions per judicial officer were 4,614 in Fiscal Year 2003/04, the 6th highest in the state for courts with three or more judicial officers.^{vii}
- The Riverside County Board of supervisors has recently authorized substantial increases in staff for the court's justice partners – Sheriff, District Attorney, and Public Defender – to deal with the court's increasing caseload. However, the state has not authorized a corresponding increase in judges.

- The lack of an adequate number of judgeships translates into crowded courtrooms, overworked judicial officers and staff, and backlogged cases. Even worse, without additional judges, the court cannot meet the needs of the citizens or provide them with the access to justice and court services that they are entitled by law to receive.

ⁱ California Department of Finance Data (1/1/05)

ⁱⁱ US Census Bureau's list of 100 fastest growing counties (based on population changes from 4/1/00 to 7/1/04).

ⁱⁱⁱ CA Department of Finance Report (5/2/05)

^{iv} Number of judicial officers from the California Admin. Office of the Courts' 2004 report on court statistics.

^v Judicial Council of California Statistics Report 2005

^{vi} Judgeship Needs Assessment Study done in 2004 by the Office of Court Research, CA Admin. Office of the Courts

^{vii} Judicial Council of California 2004 and 2005 Court Statistics Reports.